DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 065 749 AC 012 726

AUTHOR	Boyce, Milton V.
TITLE	Implementing Curricula for Program Assistants in 4-H.
PUB DATE	Feb 70
NOTE	22p.; Presented to 4-H and Other Youth Section - Southern Agricultural Workers Association, Memphis, Tenn., Feb. 2-4, 1970
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Curriculum Development; *Extension Agents; *Extension Education; Inservice Education; Instructional Staff; Leadership Training; *Nonprofessional Personnel; *On the Job Training; Program Coordination; *Training Objectives; Youth Clubs
IDENTIFIERS	Extension Program Assistants; Four H Program

ABSTRACT

The selection, role, and training of the Extension program assistant is reviewed. The ever-increasing demand for Extension type workers has magnified the shortage of professional personnel to man these programs. To meet these demands, the continuing and timely training of program assistants is necessary to enhance their value to the Extension team, and to the total Extension program. Suggestions for implementing curricula are: 1. The program assistant should be screened for dependability, leadership ability, and good judgment; 2. Job descriptions, designed to spell out specific duties and responsibilities, should also include several job levels so that the assistnat perceives opportunities for advancement; 3. A clear delineation of the Extension agent's role and that of the program assistant should be established; 4. Pre-service orientation to insure a more productive working climate; 5. On-the-job training should include an in-service education program; 6. Encouragement to continue education should be given those seeking advancement; 7. Someone should be designated to have general charge of the program assistants; and 8. The pre-service and in-service training programs and the total Extension program should be evaluated on a continuing basis. (Author/LS)

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 065749

IMPLEMENTING CURRICULA

FOR

PROGRAM ASSISTANTS IN 4-H

BY

DR. V. MILTON BOYCE - RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
RALEIGH

PRESENTED TO 4-H AND OTHER YOUTH SECTION - SOUTHERN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, FEB. 2-4, 1970

AC 012 726

IMPLEMENTING CURRICULA FOR PROGRAM ASSISTANTS

V. Milton Boyce*

The Cooperative Extension Service must face the truism that it no longer can rely on graduate-level personnel to fill current or new staff positions. The urgency of this problem stems from two primary factors:

1. Professional Extension workers are finding themselves bogged down in repetitive, routine tasks that require less than professional expertise. This lack of creative challenge in the position has generated administrative problems in securing needed personnel as well as retaining new professionals.

2. Special programs designed to secure economic adequacy and greater social participation for all persons have necessitated an expansion of Extension services. The ever-increasing demand for Extension type workers has magnified the shortage of professional personnel to man these programs.

To release professionals from time-consuming routine chores, a new type of nonprofessional has been enlisted and trained. Recruited from the indigenous population,

---

*Research Associate, Department of Adult Education, North Carolina State University at Raleigh.

this nonprofessional is the target audience for the curricula discussed herein. In the Extension Service, this nonprofessional generally is referred to as a program assistant.

In describing the characteristics that uniquely qualify a person for the position of program assistant, Reiff and Riessman stated:

> The indigenous nonprofessional is poor, is from the neighborhood, and is often a member of a minority group. His family is poor. He is a peer of the client and shares a common background, language, ethnic origin, style, and group of interests which it would be impossible, and perhaps even undesirable, for most professionals to maintain.[1]

These attributes alone make the program assistant more acceptable to disadvantaged target groups and are essential if he is to bridge the communications gap between the middle-class oriented, Extension professional and new clientele.

The program assistant of today's Extension Service differs from the program assistant employed during the manpower shortage of World War II, when Extension program assistants were recruited and trained and, in turn, recruited and trained farm workers, demonstrated new labor saving equipment, sponsored boys training camps, and provided leadership in food production and preservation. Reiff and

Riessman would call these WW II program assistants "ubiquitous" nonprofessionals, in that they customarily reflected aspects of the image of the middle-class professional.[2] While these workers demonstrated the potential for extending manpower resources in Extension type work, they were unlike the new program assistants.

Thus one may ask, "What are the specific characteristics of the new program assistants and how does one go about finding and selecting these persons?"

Selection

Although qualifications for becoming a program assistant should be simple and flexible, the person selected should have sufficient intelligence to make effective use of training and supervision.

The persons selected should show some interest in working with others and particularly in development of youth. Although their knowledge of people may be limited to a single ethnic, religious, or economic group, this knowledge is necessary as a foundation on which to develop training programs. More important than formal education as the criterion for selection should be certain leadership qualities that may have been acquired in volunteer church work, neighborhood organizations, or youth

organizations such as 4-H.

The Human Resource Development Center of the U. S. Employment Service for Washington, D.C., lists criteria for selecting employment aides that might be helpful in selecting program assistants. The suggested selection criteria are:

1. Brief written statement (two paragraphs) on why employment counseling (Extension activities) in the neighborhood is important to disadvantaged individuals. The statement should be evaluated--not graded--on content rather than spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

2. An oral interview to determine interest, motivation, ability to meet and deal with disadvantaged persons, and ability to take oral directions.

3. Evaluation of educational background, work experience, and community involvement.

4. Arrest and/or criminal records should not be a significant factor and should be evaluated on individual merits. In fact, membership in an organization such as Efforts for Ex-Convicts (EFEC) should be considered a plus for community involvement.[3]

There appears to be no shortage of recruits for the position of program assistant. The most immediate problem is a careful evaluation and description of the job function to confine the role within the limited skills of those being considered for employment.

Role

For full implementation of the program assistants'

placement and training, there first must be large-scale studies of the activities performed by Extension agents, and particularly in the area where the program assistant is to work. These specific duties and functions for which program assistants are to be responsible must be delineated. These responsibilities, of course, will change as the program assistant advances to a more intermediate role between his beginning duties and the duties of the professional.

According to Riessman, one of the greatest problems experienced by the nonprofessional program assistant is role ambiguity or lack of role identity. "He does not know who he is or who he is becoming."[4] He is a new marginal man, no longer a simple member of his group nor a member of the professional group.

The most common method used to overcome role ambiguity is the prepared program assistant's job description--a list of principle duties and responsibilities.

The development of a job description and the determination of program assistants' relationship to the professional staff and community is the second step in preplanning for training programs. At this stage, the program initiators should undertake a comprehensive orientation program to acquaint the Extension staff with the

role of program assistants. Other legitimizing bodies, such as Extension advisory boards and county courts also should be apprised of the role of the program assistant. The development of initial job descriptions, the expected team efforts, and the pre-service orientation should involve the professional Extension staff, welfare and social workers, and university subject-matter specialists.

Job Description

It is recommended that there be job descriptions developed for several levels of job expectation. The first level, entry-level job, should require minimal skill and education. Additional levels of job descriptions should be based on the experience and training received by the program assistant and should provide for his advancement.

Pointer and Fishman pointed out:

> Job descriptions can be developed in two ways. The tasks the trainees are to perform can be determined by arbitrarily extracting from the professional's work those functions that require little education and no training--the fragmented approach. Or tasks may be based on a reorganization or realignment of all functions in a given area of service with each worker assigned to do what he can do best.[5]

The initial job descriptions should be flexible so that they can be changed as agreed upon by the individual program assistant and the professional team.

For the program assistant to become a truly functional

member of the Extension team, thought must be given to his future. Weisz asserted that this often is not the practice:

> Generally it appears that the nonprofessional is viewed within the agency as solving immediate problems, such as meeting requirements of OEO, assisting key leaders in communities by giving them jobs, and more important, getting the immediate job done.[6]

The result is that the "ubiquitous" type program assistants rather than the "indigenous" poor dominate the ranks of this new position.

Relationship to Professionals and Community

A major argument for the presumed benefits from the use of indigenous nonprofessionals is that it will lead to more effective use of professional personnel. Occasionally, however, persons with advanced degrees and training feel threatened by the new, less well-trained employee. Thus, it is vital that the professional staff be involved in the implementation of an Extension program involving program assistants.

The Extension agent also must understand the discrepant role of the program assistant due to the marginal position that the program assistant occupies. Since the assistant will be working with professional Extension workers and will be given part of their professional

responsibility, he will be expected to be deeply involved in the objectives of the organization and thus will come to identify with the professional. At the same time the program assistant is a member of the client community and will identify with them. Through this dual group identity, the program assistant will obtain information from both the Extension agent group and the client group. If not properly utilized, this information can become "destructive." Erving Goffman defined "destructive" information as information about facts which, if attention is drawn to them during a performance, will discredit, disrupt, or make useless the impression that the performance fosters.[7]

Both the Extension agent and program assistant must be carefully prepared and trained before the initial on-the-job contact so that each will know his role, rights, and responsibilities.

Training

The training program should provide instruction in specific skills needed, as well as how to relate positively to other members of the staff and to the target audience. A feeling of "belonging" to the Extension team must be generated in the program assistant during the training process.

Pearl and Riessman described the training period as a

screening process:

> The training provides an opportunity to assess trainees in a work situation, to introduce corrective procedures when the program assistant fails to measure up, and, in those cases where all else fails, to eliminate trainees who perform inadequately from consideration for assignment.[8]

The training program suggested has two phases. The first phase is pre-service orientation, which may range from a few days to several weeks. The second phase is in-service on-the-job training, which may be one-day workshops or several weeks of formal classroom instruction. The training should be a continuous process and should be job-related.

Pre-service Orientation

Pre-service training programs will vary according to the needs of the new program assistants. the program of emphasis, and the experience of the Extension staff in working with program assistants. Most trainers agree, however, that pre-training should be primarily job simulation, role-playing, on-the-job learning, buzz-sessions, or the more active training methods. Lectures, reading, and writing assignments can be introduced as training proceeds and as the program assistant gains in confidence and skills.

Suggested content areas for pre-service training are:

team teaching, Extension and community relations, human growth and development, curriculum materials, and subject matter.

1. Team teaching. The Extension agent and program assistant are both involved in acquiring experience in joint planning, execution, and evaluation of educational programs. The training should give the Extension agent a chance to become personally acquainted with the program assistant as well as to learn what the assistant can do best, what his skills are, and what his experiences with children have been. Team teaching also will provide an opportunity to establish a clear understanding of the separation of the Extension agent's professional role and that of the program assistant. Cooperating Extension agents and program assistants must understand thoroughly their relationship to each other as they plan and carry out routine Extension activities.

2. Extension and Community Relations. The assistant should gain a knowledge of the Cooperative Extension Service--its philosophy, goals, methods, and concepts. This may be partly accomplished by introducing trainees to the use of available community resources and agencies through field trips and informal visits with community leaders. A "Program Assistant's Handbook" would be helpful.[9] The assistant also should learn (1) how to make referrals and

to disseminate such information that will enable clientele to help themselves, (2) how to make contacts with clientele, (3) how to make reports and keep records, and (4) how to plan and conduct formal and informal meetings.

3. Human Growth and Development. Through discussions, films, and talks with subject-matter specialists, the program assistant should gain a basic knowledge of human growth and development. Emphasis should be given to stages of growth and their accompanying needs. Both the program assistant and the Extension agent will have personal experiences that can be shared.

4. Curriculum Materials. The program assistants should gain practical experience in the use of various media for giving instruction or for assisting the Extension agent with instruction. Utilization of media involves at least three major functions: operations, storage, and minor maintenance. The ability to develop audio and visual materials also should be included in this phase of the pretraining.

5. Subject Matter. Specific skills needed in the area of concern--such as teenage nutrition--should be discussed in detail. The program assistant must understand the materials to be dispersed. More difficult tasks may be broken down into stages, with the assistant being

required to perform only a limited part of the task until further skills have been acquired on the job.

In addition to the above content areas, remedial programs should be available to program assistants as an opportunity to improve their ability to learn. Programmed learning offers many possibilities in this area. All program assistants may not wish to advance, but the opportunity should be available for those who do.

During the pre-service orientation process and at its conclusion, information should be gathered to use in any needed curriculum modification. Program assistants should be asked to indicate which areas of the program seemed most beneficial to them. The behavioral objectives that must be established to give direction to the training program also are used as tools for evaluation. These objectives should: (1) describe what the trainee does; (2) describe the conditions under which performance is to be observed, and (3) define the standards that the trainee must meet.

In-service Training

By working on the job, and at times under close supervision, the program assistant will learn from his own expe-rience. Opportunities should be provided for planned discussions between assistants and also with Extension agents.

Riessman referred to peer group learning as the "helper principle."[10] This principle has been extended into a national effort with the formulation of the National Association of New Careerists, an association that places emphasis on developing upward mobility for New Careerists.

The transition from pre-service to in-service training is made through a joint effort by the trainer, Extension agent, and program assistant. Most of the immediate training needs can be met through regular conferences and short workshops or seminars and in individual counseling.

In addition to the short in-service training periods the program assistants who wish to advance should be provided an opportunity to take courses for credit.

Using the example set by the Forestry Service I have developed a proposal for a training curriculum which could be implemented in the community college systems and which could be used to advance the program assistant to a program associate position. This program would be for those assistants with a high school education or those who have acquired the equivalent of a high school education through remedial self-improvement programs.

The suggested advancement training would be in sequence with pre-service training, but would be more complex. The suggested course would be for credit, with a

"Technical Diploma in Human Service" given for completion. The proposed curriculum is listed below, with emphasis on Extension youth programs.

Curriculum

		Credit
AEX 101	History and Philosophy of the Cooperative Extension Service	3
ENG 111	Basic Communications	3
PSY 121	Human Relations	3
	*Elective	0-3
Second Quarter		
AEX 102	4-H Club Work	3
ENG 112	Speech	3
ENG 113	Report Writing	3
	*Elective	0-3
Third Quarter		
AEX 103	On Job Training	3
Fourth Quarter		
PHY 122	Learning Theory	3
SOC 131	Community Leadership	3
AEX 104	Extension Resources	3
	*Elective	0-3

*The student has the option of an elective that may be used for credit at the college transfer level, noncredit audit at the college transfer level, or noncredit in a developmental course.

Suggested Course Descriptions

In each course description there is listed the course number, followed by the course title (AEX = Agriculture Extension). The number listed to the right is the number of quarter-hours of credits for the course.

AEX 101 History and Philosophy of the Cooperative Extension Service 3

A basic course in the introduction to the Cooperative Extension Service and its methods of operation. The student should become familiar with the history, legal base, scope, functions, and objectives of the organization.

ENG 111 Basic Communications 3

This course deals with the development of the ability to communicate effectively through the medium of good language usage in speaking and writing. Study of the language and concepts used in Extension should be included. Emphasis should also be put on the writing of announcements to publicize the programs of the organization.

PSY 121 Human Relations 3

The development of an understanding of relationships to other persons through some of the basic principles of human psychology. The need for teaching the skills for effective democratic citizenship should be stressed. An inquiry should be made into the importance of involving people in planning.

AEX 102 4-H Club Work 3

A lecture course designed to introduce the student to the history, philosophy, and purposes of 4-H Club work. The student should learn the basic needs of youth and the value of strong adult volunteer leadership. Methods of performing 4-H Club work and familiarity with project material should be emphasized.

ENG 112 Speech 3

A study of the mechanics of speech; adaptation of method to purpose of speaking; preparation of specific kinds of speeches; presentation of extemporaneous, impromptu, prepared, and memorized material. Emphasis also should be placed on how to organize and conduct a meeting and proper use of parliamentary procedures.

ENG 113 Report Writing 3

This course is designed to aid the student in the improvement of self-expression and brevity. A portion of the course should be devoted to the statistical forms used for reporting results of Extension work to the university.

AEX 103 On-The-Job Training 3

This is a period of nine weeks in the county work situation. It should serve to introduce the program aide, the county chairman, and the area director to the total program. The student should investigate his special duties and attempt

to identify problems to be solved in the next quarter of courses. This course requires close cooperation among the area director, county chairman, and program assistant trainees. Actual work hours should be arranged, but student should have free time to evaluate and identify the problems of the week.

PHY 122 Learning Theory 3

This course is a basic introduction to learning theory. The student should receive instruction on how to involve people in activities and how to meet the needs of children. Such concepts as motivation, transfer, readiness, reinforcement, critical thinking, and problem-solving should be included.

SOC 131 Community Leadership 3

A basic course in identifying the different types of leaders and in the development of democratic leadership. The importance of the power structure in the community should be stressed, with emphasis on the value of leader involvement.

AEX 104 Extension Resources 3

A comprehensive course designed to study the line and staff positions in the Cooperative Extension Service organization. When the positions are identified, there should be acknowledgment of resources available through

them to assist the program assistant. Emphasis should include the use of publications, periodicals, and visuals and their source. Other cooperating agencies and their functions should be recognized.

Pre-service and in-service training should be reinforced by consultant visitations; i.e., a person in the area or State should be designated to head the program assistants training programs. The program assistants can identify with this person and discuss personal and team problems. Visits by this individual can serve as a means of interpreting selected information needed by the assistant and also as a form of recognition.

Summary

Continuing and timely training of program assistants enhances their value to the Extension team and to the total Extension program. Suggestions for initiating the curricula have been borrowed from the experiences of others.

1. The program assistant should be screened for such personal qualities as dependability, leadership ability, and use of good judgment.
2. Program assistant job descriptions, designed to spell out specific duties and responsibilities,

also should include several job levels so that the assistant perceives opportunities for advancement.

3. A clear delineation of the Extension agent's role and that of the program assistant should be established. Each should thoroughly understand his relationship to the other as they plan and carry out Extension activities. The success of a program assistant depends upon a mutually cooperative relationship between him and the professional Extension staff.
4. Pre-service orientation to include both program assistants and Extension agents with whom they will be working will help to insure a more productive working climate.
5. On-the-job training should include an in-service education program, as well as an opportunity for program assistants to get together and exchange ideas. Association membership should be encouraged.
6. Program assistants who wish to advance should be urged to take college courses in human development, psychology, and other courses

having relationship to the job.

7. Someone should be designated to have general charge of the program assistants.
8. The pre-service and in-service training programs and the total Extension program should be evaluated on a continuing basis.

FOOTNOTES

1. Robert Reiff and Frank Riessman, The Indigenous Nonprofessional (New York: Behavioral Publications, Inc., 1965), p. 7.

2. Ibid., p. 5.

3. Human Resources Development Center #1, Employment Aide (no publisher, place, or date indicated).

4. Frank Riessman, "Strategies and Suggestions for Training Nonprofessionals," Community Mental Health Journal, III (Summer, 1967), 103-110.

5. Avis Y. Pointer and Jacob R. Fishman, New Careers: Entry-Level Training for The Human Service Aide (Washington, D. C.: Information Clearinghouse on New Careers, 1968), p. 8.

6. Vara C. Weisz, A Junior College's Approach to Training Auxiliary Personnel in Education (Springfield, Va.: Clearinghouse for Federal Scientific and Technical Information, 1968), p. 40.

7. Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p. 141.

8. Arthur Pearl and Frank Riessman, New Careers for the Poor (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 157.

9. See, for example, Janalya Rouls, Handbook for Home Economics Program Assistants, PA-680 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1965), pp. 1-31.

10. Riessman, op. cit., p. 105.

ERIC Clearinghouse
AUG 7 1972
on Adult Education